



Red Fox

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Carnivora
Family: Canidae
Genus: *Vulpes*
Species: *V. Vulpes*



Habitat

- The red fox is one of the most wide-ranging and abundant wild canid species living in the world today. It is found throughout Europe, Asia, and North America, and inhabits northern Africa. The red fox is able to occupy diverse habitats ranging from northern tundra to desert areas. It is found in brushy areas, pastures and croplands, and mixed hardwood stands. The preferable habitat is a combination of woods and open areas. Red foxes also make their homes in suburban areas such as parks, cemeteries, golf courses, and large gardens.

Characteristics

- Height: 36-42 inches nose to tail; the tail is one third of this length.
- Weight: 8-17 lbs.
- Description: The red fox has long, pointed, erect ears and a narrow elongated muzzle. The dense soft pelage of the upper body and the tail is reddish yellow and darkest on the shoulders and back. The lower regions of the face, muzzle, throat, chest and belly are white. The moderately long, slender legs are black, as are the ears. The long, bushy tail has a white tip that characterizes the species. The forefoot has five claws, the hind foot four. The male and female are similar in appearance. There are color phases of the red fox: red, black and intermediate range. Color phases are determined genetically. The tail of the red fox is used for balance and for keeping the nose warm while sleeping. There is a tail gland which exudes a "foxy" skunk-like odor. The red fox exhibits a number of distinctly cat-like physiological features not found in other canid groups. Among these are semi-retractile claws, long thin canine teeth, a specialized eye structure (including a vertical-slit pupil) for good nocturnal vision, and a fine sense of balance.

Behaviors

- The red fox's most successful adaptation is its flexible feeding strategy. Both an opportunistic scavenger and a skilled hunter of small animals, the red fox has adapted the technique of sometimes catching its prey by burying it in snow or dirt. It may do this when food is abundant, but more often in winter when the fox needs to use its kills efficiently. The red fox is a solitary canid. Generally monogamous, an adult pair may occupy the same home range but move about independently, except during the breeding season. Territory boundaries are marked by depositing urine and feces on prominent landmarks, such as tufts of grass. Red foxes are largely nocturnal, becoming active at twilight. They tend to sleep in the open during the day. In addition to scent marking, red foxes communicate by vocalizations (yaps, screams, or howls) and by ritualized behaviors and posturing.

Predators: Adult red foxes have few natural enemies except for the coyote and humans, although many carnivores including large birds of prey may take the young.

Reproduction

- Gestation- 52 (51-54) days
- Mating takes place from December to March. During this period the bonded pair will explore den sites within their home range. The foxes may dig their own dens or use a rock crevice or hollow log, but most commonly they remodel an abandoned woodchuck or skunk burrow. Several dens may be prepared, since foxes will move their pups if disturbed. The female has one litter per year, with an average of five pups, although one to ten may be born. The young are born between March and May, and the female then stays with them constantly for about two weeks while the male brings food. The pups open their eyes at

8-9 days, walk at 3 weeks, and at 6 weeks gradually emerge from the den. They are weaned by 3 month of age and fully grown at 6 months. The family disperses in mid-September or October. Both male and female are sexually mature at 10 months.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** Small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, birds, eggs, carrion, fruits, nuts, grasses, domestic poultry when the opportunity exist.

Life Expectancy: 3-6 years in the wild: up to 15 years in captivity

Conservation Status

- Annually, hundreds of thousands of foxes are harvested world-wide for their pelts, and many more are killed for rabies and predator control. However, disease seems to be the main mortality factor in red fox populations, with canine distemper and sarcoptic mange being more prevalent than rabies. Red foxes are resilient and adaptive. They continue to expand their range into areas where humans have eliminated competing predators, such as the bobcat, coyote, and wolf.

Sources:

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